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Solar lighting campaign aims to light up the developing world

London, March 15: Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), who recently accepted the Noble Peace Prize on behalf of the organization, has given his backing to a campaign called 'Lighting a billion lives', which aims to provide solar lighting to the developing world.

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According to a report in Nature News, the billion lives campaign, run by India's Energy and Resources Institute in New Delhi, aims to give people in remote areas access to cheap, rented, rechargeable lanterns.

The project was launched in September 2007 with the more modest number of a million in the title, but last month it was re-launched with a billion people in its sights.

According to project coordinator Akanksha Chaurey, the solar-powered lamps are a cleaner alternative to the kerosene or crop leftovers often burned to provide

household lighting after dark.

"They should allow more time for adults to work and children to study, while avoiding the health issues of burning materials in the home," she said.

Chaurey noted that the plan should also help to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions as every <u>lantern</u>, over the course of its 10-year working life, saves almost 3 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

So far, the campaign stretches to just ten villages, each of which is due to receive a donation of 7,500 dollars to pay for 50 lanterns and a central charging station.

The first two stations have been installed, one near Calcutta and another in a village not far from Delhi.

Once the central solar station is in place, villagers can hire a lantern for around 5 rupees per charge - roughly what a typical household would otherwise spend on kerosene.

The project is seeking donors to sponsor the purchase of the lamps, which cost 80 dollars each - far beyond the pocket of most Indian villagers.

"We hope to get large chunks of support from companies, as well as from individuals sponsoring one or two lanterns each," said Chaurey.

According to Chaurey, she has two years to make significant inroads before faith in the billion lives project begins to wane.

"There's no deadline, but right now we are aggressively pushing it," she said. "The Indian government is promoting education for all - that means spending money on the remotest villages. They need lighting at night so the kids can come home and study," she

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